

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-12 (Canceled).

Claim 13 (Currently Amended): A method of producing a hyaluronic acid gel which comprises adjusting a hyaluronic acid, or alkali metal salt thereof, solution to a pH 3.5 or below, and freezing and thawing the solution at least once.

Claim 14 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 13, wherein the gel dissolves in a neutral aqueous solution at 37°C in 12 hours to a degree of dissolution of at most 50%.

Claim 15 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 13, wherein the gel dissolves to yield solubilized hyaluronic acid having a molecular branched structure and partly containing a molecular weight fraction with a branching degree of at least 0.5, when treated under accelerating conditions for acid hydrolysis of hyaluronic acid.

Claim 16 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 13, wherein the gel has not been subjected to chemical crosslinking by a chemical crosslinking compound or chemical modification by a chemical modifying compound and which is not in the form of a complex with a cationic polymer and (1) which dissolves in a neutral aqueous solution at 25°C in one day to a degree of dissolution of at most 50% or (2) which dissolves in a neutral aqueous solution at 37°C in 12 hours to a degree of dissolution of at most 50%, or both.

Claim 17 (New): The method of claim 13, wherein the hyaluronic acid of said hyaluronic acid solution has a molecular weight of from about 1×10^5 to about 1×10^7 Da.

Claim 18 (New): The method of claim 13, wherein the hyaluronic acid concentration of said hyaluronic acid solution is 5.0 wt.% or less.

Claim 19 (New): The method of claim 13, wherein the hyaluronic acid of said hyaluronic acid solution has a molecular weight of 2×10^6 Da or more, and the hyaluronic acid concentration of said hyaluronic acid solution is 2.5 wt.% or less.

Claim 20 (New): The method of claim 13, wherein the pH is adjusted to 3.5 or below with hydrochloric acid, nitric acid or sulfuric acid.

Claim 21 (New): The method of claim 13, wherein the pH is adjusted to 2.5 or below.

Claim 22 (New): The method of claim 13, wherein the freezing temperature is not higher than the ice point, and the thawing temperature is not lower than the ice point.

Claim 23 (New): The method of claim 22, wherein the freezing temperature is -5°C or below, and the thawing temperature is 5°C or above.

Claim 24 (New): The method of claim 13, wherein the freezing and thawing is repeated at least once.

Claim 25 (New): The method of claim 13, wherein after freezing and thawing the solution, the acid component is removed.

Claim 26 (New): The method of claim 25, wherein removal of the acid component is carried out by washing with an aqueous solvent.

Claim 27 (New): The method of claim 13, wherein the hyaluronic acid gel is subjected to a post-treatment.

Claim 28 (New): The method of claim 27, wherein said post-treatment is mechanical fragmentation, rolling or spinning.